

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.(Currently Amended) A method for enabling a user to load a game and to automatically join play an online game with a friend selected from a friends list of the user, comprising the steps of:

- (a) initiating a gaming session by logging a user on to an online gaming service; enabling the user to select a friend from the friends list of the user
- (b) identifying an online game associated with the online gaming service to join that is currently being played by the friend, wherein the online game is different than an online game currently loaded for play by the user;
- (b) enabling the user to selectively do one of the following:
 - (i) send an invitation to the friend selected from the friends list, to join the user in playing in an online game currently loaded for play by the user, even if the friend is currently playing a different online game; and
 - (ii) join the friend in playing an online game being played by the friend, even if the friend is currently playing a different online game than the online game currently loaded for play by the user;
 - (c) if the invitation was sent and was accepted by the friend, connecting the friend who was invited, in playing the online game currently loaded for play by the user; and
 - (d) if the user chose to join the friend in playing, connecting the user to play the online game being played by the friend.
- (c) causing data identifying the online game currently being played by the friend to be stored in a local non-volatile storage;
- (d) prompting the user to load the online game currently being played by the friend;
- (e) restarting the gaming session of the user with a newly loaded online game in response to user input; and

- (f) automatically comparing the online game being played by the friend, as indicated by the data stored in the local non-volatile storage, with the newly loaded online game, and automatically joining the online game being played by the friend by bypassing at least some login requirements and without requiring any logon or password when it is determined:
- (i) the newly loaded online game is actually the same as the online game currently being played by the friend;
 - (ii) the current online game being played by the friend has an opening for the user to join; and
 - (iii) the online game of the friend has not yet concluded.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein identifying an online game comprises if the user selecting the online game being played by the friend from a friend list of the user, chose to join the friend in playing the online game being played by the friend, and if the online game currently loaded for play by the user is different than the online game currently being played by the friend, further comprising the step of:

- (a) causing data identifying the online game currently being played by the friend and a game session currently being played by the friend to be stored in a non volatile storage;
- (b) prompting the user to load the online game currently being played by the friend; and
- (c) automatically comparing the online game being played by the friend as indicated by the data stored in non volatile storage with the online game just loaded by the user, and enabling the user to join in playing the online game being played by the friend if:
 - (i) the online game just loaded by the user is the same as the online game currently being played by the friend;
 - (ii) the current online game session of the friend has an opening for the user to play; and
 - (iii) the online game session of the friend has not yet concluded.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 12, wherein the data stored in the local non-volatile storage are disregarded when the online game currently being played by the friend is loaded by the user, if more than a predefined interval of time has elapsed since the data identifying the online game and the online game session being played by the friend were stored in the local non-volatile storage.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein identifying an online game comprises accepting if the friend accepts the an invitation from the friend user to play in the online game currently loaded being played by the frienduser, which is different than the online game currently being played by the friend, further comprising the steps of:

____ (a) ____ causing data identifying the online game and a game session being played by the user to be stored in a non-volatile storage;

____ (b) ____ prompting the friend to load the online game currently loaded by the user;

____ (c) ____ automatically comparing the online game currently loaded by the user, as indicated by the data stored in the non-volatile storage, with the online game just loaded by the friend; and

____ (d) ____ enabling the friend to join in playing the online game being played by the user if:

____ (i) ____ the online game just loaded by the friend is the same as the online game currently loaded by the user;

____ (ii) ____ the online game session of the user has an opening for the friend to play; and

____ (iii) ____ the online game session of the user has not yet concluded.

5-6 (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 41, further comprising the step of displaying the invitation from the user-friend to the userfriend.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

(a) enabling the user friend to host the online game and to determine parameters related to the play of the online game; and

(b) enabling the user friend to selectively determine, as one of the parameters, that one or more openings for other players to play the online game will be filled by friends included in the friends list of the userfriend.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 8, further comprising the step of enabling the user friend to send a plurality of invitations to friends included in the friends list of the userfriend, to play the online game currently loaded by the userfriend.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 41, further comprising the steps of:

(a) enabling the user friend to host the online game and to determine parameters related to the play of the online game; and

(b) enabling the user friend to only allow friends to join the online game being hosted by the userfriend.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 41, further comprising the steps of:

(a) enabling the user friend to host the online game and to determine parameters related to the play of the online game; and

(b) enabling the user friend to only allow invited friends to join the online game being hosted by the userfriend.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling the user to selectively add an online player to the friends list of the user by:

(a) sending a request to the online player to add the online player to the friends list of the user; and

(b) if the online player selectively accepts the request, automatically adding the online player to the friends list of the user, and automatically adding the user to the friends list of the online player.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the step of enabling the user to cancel the request for the online player to be added to the friends list of the user if the online player has not yet accepted the request.

14 -15 (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the step of enabling the user friend to set a plurality of options that control an interaction between the friend user selected in the friends list and the friend user during play of online games.

17. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying information related to online game play for each friend on the friends list.

18. (Currently Amended) A memory medium on which are stored machine readable instructions for carrying out the steps of the method of Claim 1.

19.(Currently Amended) A system for enabling a user change an online game and jointo play an online game with a friend selected from a friends list of the user, comprising:

- (a) a gaming service that couples players in communication to play online games over a network; and
- (b) a game playing device that includes:
 - (i) a network interface for coupling the game playing device in communication with the gaming service and with other game playing devices;
 - (ii) a memory for storing machine readable instructions;
 - (iii) a user input control;
 - (iv) a display interface that is adapted to couple to a display;
- and
- (v) a processor that is connected to the network interface, the memory, the user input control, and the display interface, said processor executing the machine instructions stored in memory to carry out a plurality of functions, including:

logging on to an online gaming service;

(1)-identifying an online game associated with the online gaming service to join that is currently being played by the friend, wherein the online game is different than the online game currently loaded for play by the user—— responding to a selection of a friend from the friends list of the user;;

(2)-causing data identifying the online game currently being played by the friend to be stored in a local non-volatile storage; sending an invitation to the friend selected from the friends list, to join in playing in the online game currently loaded in the game playing device of the user, even if the friend is currently playing a different online game, or alternatively, causing the gaming service to join the user in playing an online game being played by the friend, even if the friend is currently playing a different online game than the online game currently loaded in the game playing device of the user;

(3) ~~prompting the user to load the online game currently being played by the friend if the invitation was sent by the user and accepted by the friend, causing the online gaming service to connect the friend who was invited in playing the online game currently loaded for play by the user; and~~

~~restarting the gaming session of the user with a newly loaded online game in response to user input; and~~

(4) ~~if the user chose to join the friend in playing, causing the online gaming service to connect the user in playing the online game currently being played by the friend.~~

~~automatically comparing the online game being played by the friend, as indicated by the data stored in the local non-volatile storage, with the newly loaded online game, and automatically joining the online game being played by the friend by bypassing at least some login requirements and without requiring any logon or password when it is determined :~~

(i) ~~the newly loaded online game is actually the same as the online game currently being played by the friend;~~

(ii) ~~the current online game being played by the friend has an opening for the user to join; and~~

(iii) ~~the online game of the friend has not yet concluded.~~

20. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 19, wherein identifying an online game comprises if the user accepting an invitation from chose to join the friend to join in playing the online game being played by the friend, and if the online game currently loaded for play by the user is different than the online game currently being played by the friend, the machine language instructions cause the processor to:

- _____ (a) store data identifying the online game currently being played by the friend and a game session currently being played by the friend in the memory;
- _____ (b) prompt the user to load the online game currently being played by the friend in to the game playing device of the user; and
- _____ (c) automatically compare the online game being played by the friend as indicated by the data stored in memory with the online game just loaded by the user, and enable the user to join in playing the online game being played by the friend if:
 - _____ (i) the online game just loaded by the user is the same as the online game currently being played by the friend;
 - _____ (ii) the game being played by the friend has an opening for the user to play; and
 - _____ (iii) a game session for the game being played by the friend when the user selected an option to join the friend has not yet concluded.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 2019, wherein the data stored in the memory of the game playing device of the user are disregarded when the online game currently being played by the friend is loaded in the game playing device by the user, if more than a predefined interval of time has elapsed since the data identifying the online game and the online game session being played by the friend were stored in said memory.

22. Canceled

23. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 1920, wherein the invitation received from the user friend is displayed to the friend user.

24. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 4920, wherein the gaming service automatically cancels the invitation sent to the ~~friend-user included on the friends list of the user~~ after a predefined period of time has elapsed without the ~~friend-user~~ accepting the invitation to play in the online game currently loaded for play by the ~~userfriend~~.

25. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 4920, wherein the machine instructions further cause the processor to enable the ~~user-friend~~ to set a plurality of options that control an interaction between the friend selected in the friends list and the user, during play of online games.

26. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 4920, wherein the machine instructions further cause the processor to display information related to online game play for each friend on the friends list of the user.

27-28 Cancelled